



HB 4265 & 4266

POSITION STATEMENT

The Michigan Recycling Coalition strongly urges legislators to oppose House Bills 4265 and 4266.

JOBS & ECONOMICS

The 1995 Yard Waste Ban is a proactive solution for managing leaves and grass as a resource rather than a waste. Composting Michigan's yard waste provides 4 times the number of jobs than landfilling. It is a growing industry with active investors. Any exemption to the Yard Waste Ban will: 1) Cripple a developing industry that benefits local economies; 2) Reduce the state's already low recycling rate; 3) Contradict the current State Solid Waste Policy; and 4) Threaten at least 40 privately held businesses in Michigan.

Composting is a cost-effective, low-tech, environmentally sound, and decentralized method for managing yard clippings and other organics without the short and long-term costs of disposal. Composting businesses will lose their raw materials and close their doors if these bills pass. These companies own land, pay property taxes, and sell their finished product to consumers who pay sales taxes. They hire truckers; buy heavy equipment; contract for maintenance. Their employees pay income taxes. All of this positive economic activity will be lost with exemptions to the yard waste ban.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS

Landfills are engineered to exacting and expensive specifications to control toxic releases resulting from the disposal of municipal solid and hazardous waste. Such controls are *overkill* for leaves and grass. Wasting valuable landfill space on yard waste at higher cost and little benefit to governments, businesses, and citizens to create more methane is short-sighted.

Of Michigan's 50 landfills, 37 currently have active gas collection capabilities. But landfill gas is a *waste* product of disposal. Even landfills designed to capture methane are inefficient and still emit considerable amounts of methane, which is 21 times more potent than carbon dioxide, to the atmosphere. Furthermore, landfill gas is a poor performing, dirty source of energy that will contribute only a negligible amount of energy for Michigan.

While it is important to capture landfill gas generated from MSW for which there is no other utilization option, a better option does exist for yard waste; composting. These bills would have a net negative impact on the economy and the environment.

COST

Some local governments may see an initial decrease in their solid waste management costs, while others will likely see an increase. Composting tip fees are typically less expensive than solid waste disposal charges. The closure of existing yard composting facilities as a result of these bills will result in fewer alternatives for managing yard clippings and municipalities will be forced to pay the higher landfill disposal fees. These bills will accelerate the depletion of existing landfill space in Michigan, causing an increase in disposal costs for Michigan's businesses, cities, and residents, however, not a large enough increase to keep Michigan from being a dumping ground.

Any serious attempt at generating energy from yard waste and biomass would involve investment in up-to-date technology, such as in-vessel digesters, whose express purpose is to efficiently capture methane for energy use and still provide a useful soil amendment end product. Putting yard waste back into the landfill runs counter to modern waste management trends and places Michigan at a competitive disadvantage with regard to the development and implementation emerging recycling and composting technologies.

These bills will have a detrimental impact on Michigan's composting industry, resulting in a net loss of jobs in Michigan. And, of course, why spend money to bury valued resources?

The MRC Board, Composting Council, and members urge you to oppose HB 4265 & 4266.